



Producers Can Turn to Engel to Sell Local

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MADISON – When you think Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin, you should think of Teresa Engel, the Program’s Manager at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). If a producer has an idea to start, expand, or modify a farm operation to sell their products locally, Engel can provide the connections and resources needed to turn that dream into a reality.

“Through Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin we are focusing on producer development, addressing industry hurdles, and building statewide networking,” said Engel. “Through the partnership with the Wisconsin Local Food Network, we are able to work with state, regional and local groups to share ideas, experiences and innovations to move forward together without duplicating services.”

Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin offers a variety of services to producers that Engel has helped to develop and oversee. One of these services is Producers First, which provides support for one-on-one technical assistance. Producers who apply can fill a need on their operation, such as business planning or packaging development, by meeting with an expert consultant of their choice.

Previous to her role at DATCP, Engel worked for the non-profit Minnesota Food Association as a food broker, assisting Hmong and Latino growers to aggregate, market, and sell their products. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls with a degree in horticulture. Engel started her work with the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program in April 2008.

“Despite the economic downturn in 2008, there has been an increased consumer demand for local foods in the past three years that does not appear to be going away anytime soon,” explained Engel. “There are many requests for services by producers just starting out or expanding their operation to increase the supply of locally-produced foods.”

Producers can also take advantage of the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Workshop Roadshows that are currently in their third year. This winter, courses will be offered in employee management, QuickBooks® and branding. Another educational piece for producers is the Wisconsin Local Food Marketing Guide. This free 132-page publication is available online and offers business profiles, marketing tools, updated information on laws and regulations and tools for launching a business.

In this position, Engel is very active in the Wisconsin Local Food Network, which continues to grow. The Network engages, connects, and empowers local, regional, and state efforts to build resilient and restorative food systems. The Wisconsin Local Food Network is currently planning for the sixth annual Wisconsin Local Food Summit, which will emphasize the importance of measuring the economic impact of local foods.

“Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin continues to evolve to identify and address hurdles facing local food system development; one of which is on-farm food safety,” added Engel. “We worked with the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association to develop an On-Farm Food Safety web-tool for fresh fruit and vegetable producers that includes resources to understand food safety regulations and know the audits and certifications available.”



Teresa Engel is the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Program Manager at DATCP. Engel works closely with the state’s producers and helps grow the Wisconsin Local Food Network.

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Engel also sees a growing opportunity for local foods in the Farm to School program, because of the large amount of interest by parents, teachers, and community members. Through Farm to School, students learn where their food comes from and build lifelong healthy eating habits. Farm to School also opens up a new institutional market for our state's producers.

The highlight of the position for Engel is seeing businesses enter or expand into the local food market and hearing about the individual accomplishments of producers. She can then share the success stories of the innovative distribution models being created in the state.

"We are able to share the challenges and successes of one producer with many others so more people can learn from their experience," concluded Engel. "We want to hear from producers and producer groups about their successes and difficulties to sell local so we can continue to assist others across the state."

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